

January 11, 2022

Tom Jameson, Chair
Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board
Department of Fish and Wildlife
P.O. Box 43200
Olympia, WA 98504-3200

Re: Support Letter for three Walla Walla County-Mill Creek passage projects proposed for funding through the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Removal Board

Dear Chairman Jameson and Members of the Board:

The Snake River Salmon Recovery Board (SRSRB) is writing to you in support of the three Walla Walla County Mill Creek fish passage projects proposed by Tri-State Steelheaders Regional Fisheries Enhancement Group (TSS) for funding through the Fish Barrier Removal Board. *Mill Creek Passage-Roosevelt Street* (21-1431) would complete final construction ready plans and construction of the uppermost remaining piece of the Mill Creek fish passage project in the concrete flume. *Mill Creek Passage-5th Avenue Bridge* (21-1432), in coordination with the City of Walla Walla, would include removal of the 5th Avenue Bridge and installation of designed fish passage treatments in the concrete flume under the bridge's current footprint. The third project, *Mill Creek Passage Design-Underground Section* (21-1433), seeks to advance existing conceptual designs to final designs for the approximately 1,600 ft of concrete flume that travels underneath Walla Walla. We believe that these projects epitomize the FBRB's priority watershed approach by leveraging multiple fish passage investments and coordinating on projects in a strategic manner.

The multiple phases of the Mill Creek fish passage project are identified as a priority projects in the Snake River Salmon Recovery Plan for SE Washington (2011) and 3-year work plan for which the Board is tasked with implementing. The Mill Creek flood control project is a unique fish passage barrier that presents multiple physical, thermal, and flow related barriers. Design and matching implementation funding for the TSS's current FBRB proposals have been provided through the SRSRB utilizing Salmon Recovery Funding Board funds, the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and Bonneville Power Administration. These projects have received rigorous local, state, and federal technical and stakeholder review and are ready to proceed pending funding.

Our Board continues to work to identify and prioritize projects using scientifically based protocols which are then vetted through a proven technical and stakeholder process within the Snake River Region. The Board and partners also seek to leverage and secure funding for high priority projects to accomplish the greatest good. Often, these habitat-focused projects provide multiple benefits for the community and local stakeholders.

To date, the Board in coordination with our partners, has addressed 67 regional fish passage barriers opening or improving access to more than 400 miles of habitat. The unique Mill Creek barrier is the most significant tributary fish passage barrier remaining in the region, with the potential to provide access to 50+ miles of habitat – addressing passage here is critical for the Walla Walla steelhead population to reach viability in the context of ESA threatened mid-Columbia River steelhead, Columbia River bull trout, and for reintroduced spring Chinook.

By funding these proposals, you will be investing in an important piece of a large coordinated project – you will also be investing in a regionally vetted project as well as a proven project sponsor in the Tri-State Steelheaders.

Thank you for your consideration of the three Walla Walla County Mill Creek fish passage projects listed above. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Executive Director, John Foltz at 509-382-4115 or by email at john@snakeriverboard.org.

Sincerely,



Bill Bowles, Chair
Snake River Salmon Recovery Board